

## **2009 Annual Report**

### **Capital Region Land Conservancy**

In 2009, the Capital Region Land Conservancy (CRLC) facilitated the permanent protection of two properties totaling over 290 acres. In early 2009, CRLC merged with the Goochland Land Alliance (GLA). The merged CRLC has facilitated the protection of 4,500 acres in the Richmond area since its inception in 2005.

Our most impressive accomplishment of 2009 is the conservation easement placed on the James River Park System, a multi-parcel 240 acre park along the James River located within the City of Richmond. CRLC played a key role in facilitating this easement in conjunction with the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Richmond Recreation and Parks Foundation. CRLC is a co-holder of the easement with these two organizations. This conservation easement will forever protect this valuable riparian property which serves as a habitat corridor for wildlife and provides a buffer area along the James River, in addition to providing recreational opportunities for park visitors.

CRLC seeks to safeguard natural areas through the donation of conservation easements and carries out its mission by educating landowners and communities in the capital region about land protection through the use of voluntary conservation easements, and facilitating the donation of these easements. CRLC serves the City of Richmond and the Counties of Chesterfield, Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, New Kent, and Charles City.

Limited direct state and federal funding is available to purchase land for conservation in the Richmond area. Voluntary, private conservation easements are the primary land protection tool. There is a tremendous need to educate landowners about conservation easements, as no other organization in the Richmond area is actively educating landowners about voluntary land protection tools.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust or government agency that permanently prohibits specified uses of a property in order to protect its conservation values. A property owner foregoes certain land development options in exchange for the legacy of permanently protecting the land in its natural state and for state and federal tax incentives associated with the charitable donation of an easement. Ownership is not affected and he or she can sell the property or will it to heirs.

CRLC uses its funding to conduct educational outreach to inform landowners about conservation easements and the attendant federal and state tax benefits, to educate the public about the benefits of land conservation, and to facilitate the donation of conservation easements. Our 2009 outreach efforts included:

- CRLC mailed over 1,000 postcards to rural landowners owning 75 acres or more in the Richmond area to educate them about conservation easements and the related tax benefits.
- CRLC, in collaboration with the Partnership for Smarter Growth, held two regional land education seminars to educate landowners and the community at large about land protection tools.
- CRLC partnered with the Green Infrastructure Center to conduct four seminars on green infrastructure planning for residents of Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan and Henrico Counties.
- As a result of its outreach efforts, CRLC conducted 14 direct landowner meetings to educate landowners about land protection options.
- In cooperation with the Green Infrastructure Center, CRLC initiated a green infrastructure study of the Richmond area to identify areas with high value natural resources. The report was completed in July 2009 and will help CRLC strategically focus its conservation efforts on high value natural resources.
- The Defenders of Wildlife selected CRLC to receive a grant to use GIS data to map natural resources in the Richmond area. The data will allow CRLC to strategically focus its land conservation efforts on properties within our service area that have high value natural resources.

One of the ultimate goals of CRLC is to receive accreditation by The Land Trust Alliance (LTA). In 2009, LTA awarded CRLC a grant to assess its operations with respect to LTA's National Standards and Practices. During the summer of 2009, the CRLC Board of Directors participated in an organizational self-assessment session facilitated by a consultant to identify areas in which improvement is needed. Several target areas were identified, and as a result of this assessment, CRLC is in the process of enhancing its operations.

In 2009, CRLC added an additional Outreach Coordinator, Jane Myers, who now serves as Outreach Coordinator for Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Charles City Counties.

In 2009, CRLC established landowner advisory councils in two localities, Powhatan and Hanover.

Total contributions in 2009 were \$59,909 and expenses were \$34,671.

Due to the size of the 2009 budget, CRLC did not have its financial statements audited.